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Evaluation

Evaluation of disability-inclusive development at UNDP

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. An estimated 15 per cent of the world's population — some 1 billion people — live with disabilities that have a direct impact on their daily lives.[1] One in every four households has a disabled member.[2] While persons with disabilities account for a large proportion of the world's population, they have been consistently left out of the gains made by global development. Disability was not mentioned in any of the Millennium Development Goals or their related targets and indicators. Evidence suggests that persons with disabilities have been left behind their non-disabled peers, and that the poorest members in many communities are consistently individuals with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are not only poorer in economic terms but are also comparatively poorer in many domains, including access to health care, education, employment and social inclusion, as well as resilience to environmental degradation and climate shocks. In addition, persons with disabilities often face stigma and prejudice that severely limit their ability to have a voice in their households and communities.[3]

2. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires that international development programmes be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.[4] The Convention particularly emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability issues, thus ensuring that disability is an integral part of sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals are founded on the principle of 'leave no one behind', and persons with disabilities are explicitly included in this new global agenda. In its resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the General Assembly requested the United Nations development system to take into account the needs of persons with disabilities in its operational activities for development, including by addressing the continuing lack of adequate and reliable information on disability and by strengthening coherence and coordination across the United Nations system.

3. The growing emphasis on disability-inclusive development places an onus on organizations like UNDP coherently, adequately and systematically to include persons with disabilities in their work. The Independent Evaluation Office consequently has undertaken an evaluation of the UNDP contribution to disability-inclusive development. The basis for this evaluation stems from the overarching strategic vision of UNDP "to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction in inequalities and exclusion".[5] The Executive Board has recognized the importance of ensuring that development support from UNDP emphasizes assistance to poor and marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities.

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[1] World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability, 2011* (Geneva, 2011).

[2] In UNDP programme countries this statistic is even higher at 20 per cent, 75 per cent of whom are women.

[3] Groce N., Kett M., *The Disability and Development Gap, Working Paper No. 21*, London: Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, University College London.

[4] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 32.

[5] UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 (DP/2013/40).

II. Background

4. This evaluation of the UNDP contribution to disability-inclusive development is part of the work programme for the Independent Evaluation Office approved by the Executive Board for 2014-2015 (document DP/2014/5). It provides an assessment of the UNDP contribution to disability-inclusive development during the period 2008-2016, corresponding to the current and previous UNDP strategic plan periods and to the period when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been in force.

5. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006 and entered into force in May 2008. Its passage constituted a landmark event in the disability arena, representing the culmination of decades of dedicated advocacy efforts by persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The Convention spells out the duties of States parties to take all appropriate measures to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms by all persons with disabilities. While the human rights framework, including the International Bill of Human Rights (comprising the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), applies to all human beings and thus bring persons with disabilities into their ambit, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first disability-specific core human rights convention. It builds on prior conventions and disability-focused General Comments adopted by treaty bodies, especially General Comment No. 5 adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

6. The rights of persons with disabilities pertain directly to UNDP as a provider of development support to countries. Reference to disabilities is made in the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, which states that key driving principles of UNDP work include "participation and voice in pursuit of equitable access to development opportunities and gains across the population, working with the poor and other excluded groups, whether women, youth, indigenous people or the disabled, as agents of their own development."[6] The Strategic Plan further states that the strengthening of local governance is key to the Plan's implementation, as it is the level closest to citizens, especially to secure more equitable access to services for the poor and other excluded groups such as persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities and victims of human trafficking.[7] The previous UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2013, in discussing its priorities for democratic governance, stated that "UNDP will assist in the identification of effective interventions strengthening participation by the poorest social sectors, as well as by women, youth, persons living with disabilities, and indigenous persons."[8]

[6] DP/2013/40, para. 13 (e).
[7] Ibid, page 9.
[8] DP/2007/43/Rev.1, para. 83.

III. Findings of the evaluation of disability-inclusive development at UNDP

Finding 1

7. UNDP is well positioned to play a prominent role in advancing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at global and country levels. The organization has not fully embraced this role, due to limited capacities and resources committed at corporate, regional and country levels in promoting the rights enshrined in the Convention.

Finding 2

8. The guidance note on programming issued in 2012 represents a positive initial step highlighting the relevance of disability inclusion for UNDP and its strategic objectives. Unfortunately, its dissemination was not given much prominence and there has been limited application of this guidance in programming on the ground.

Finding 3

9. The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), with its focus on partnership building, mobilizing joint efforts by United Nations country teams (UNCTs) and giving voice to disabled people's organizations, has proven to be a viable and innovative instrument to promote multisectoral interventions in support of the Convention.

Finding 4

10. In spite of initial understaffing and resource constraints, the work of the UNPRPD technical secretariat is considered exemplary by many key stakeholders. The secretariat is aware of bottlenecks affecting the performance of the UNPRPD and in 2016 revised the strategic and operational framework to address identified issues.

Finding 5

11. Programme results from the first funding round for the UNPRPD suggest that programmes have achieved more outcome-level objectives than anticipated from the initial programme proposals.

Finding 6

12. Survey responses suggest that there is limited awareness of the UNPRPD mechanism across UNDP, although UNCTs show growing interest in participating.

Finding 7

13. UNPRPD programming recognizes the engagement of disabled people's organizations as a priority, and the UNPRPD has facilitated several significant results in relation to promoting the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at global, regional and country levels. Evidence suggests, however, that

further efforts will be necessary to strengthen participation as a requirement for UNPRPD project proposals and actual practice on the ground.

Finding 8

14. Obtaining data and information on the UNDP contribution to disability-inclusive development was challenging, as UNDP has not tracked this support consistently.

Finding 9

15. Mainstreaming by UNDP of a disability dimension reveals a mixed picture. In some instances, country-level leadership on disability inclusion has resulted in concerted, and at times innovative, efforts to find entry points for disability inclusion in mainstream UNDP programming. Elsewhere, it is evident that very limited attention has been given to mainstreaming persons with disabilities into the broader development work of UNDP. A lack of prioritization and gaps in technical expertise are limiting UNDP results in promoting disability-inclusive development.

Finding 10

16. UNDP has put in place social and environmental standards to help the organization avoid or mitigate unintended negative consequences of its programming. These include expectations that UNDP should refrain from providing support for activities that may contribute to violations of a State's human rights obligations and the core international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Finding 11

17. UNDP supports many different types of projects related to the promotion of employment of individuals with disabilities, with varying degrees of success. Although most disability-inclusive projects are designed to cover all individuals with disabilities, many programmes end up covering persons with specific types of disabilities.

Finding 12

18. There is evidence of UNDP including persons with disabilities in its social protection programming. UNDP could play an important role in advocating for stepped-up deinstitutionalization efforts and better support for community-based living programmes.

Finding 13

19. While there are some good examples of how UNDP environmental programming addresses the needs of persons with disabilities, overall, due to the specific type of UNDP environmental projects and the fact that the multilateral environment agreements that provide a framework for this work focus on other types of vulnerabilities, the rights of persons with disabilities have not been an explicit focus of its environmental protection support.

Finding 14

20. Very limited efforts have been made to integrate persons with disabilities into UNDP activities related to health, including work related to HIV/AIDS, and projects funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Finding 15

21. The results of the evaluation suggest missed opportunities for UNDP to promote disability-inclusive development programming through its support for human rights. The 2005 UNDP Practice Note on Human Rights has not been updated to include reference to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, although UNDP has emphasized the human rights-based approach in the Guidance Note on Disability.

Finding 16

22. The evaluation found some evidence of UNDP support in advancing a disability rights dimension into the strengthening of national human rights systems at the country programme level.

Finding 17

23. Several country assessments suggest that UNDP programming has been instrumental, and in some cases a major force, in helping to develop and strengthen disability law and policy frameworks, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UNDP has also had marked success in playing a neutral convener role in bringing government and civil society actors together as required by the Convention.

Finding 18

24. Aside from a few isolated examples, the evaluation found little evidence that UNDP is advancing disability inclusion in a strong and consistent manner in its engagement with electoral processes and institutions. There is also a lack of practical guidance and lessons available within the organization on how to address the complex social, environmental, legal, information and technical barriers to equal political participation and citizen engagement by persons with disabilities.

Finding 19

25. UNDP has provided limited support to strengthening disability-related data and statistics at country and global levels. Of 11 countries visited, three indicated that UNDP provided support in the collection of disability-related data and statistics: Albania, Belarus and South Africa. In addition, the UNPRPD has supported work on disability statistics implemented by various United Nations organizations.

Finding 20

26. UNDP crisis response and recovery support tends to be subsumed under the rubric of addressing all vulnerable groups and does not identify or respond to the particular barriers faced by persons with disabilities affected by crisis.

Finding 21

27. UNDP remains an active participant in mine action, with support still underway in 20 countries. While its victim assistance portfolio is small, there are good examples of the work that UNDP is doing in the area of development and mine victim assistance. There are some instances where this assistance has broadened into more comprehensive support for persons with disabilities.

Finding 22

28. There is limited recognition in UNDP of the need to ensure disability inclusion within risk reduction and preparedness initiatives. Where this recognition does exist, there is a need for enhanced technical support on how to design and implement disability-inclusive programmes.

Finding 23

29. The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, 2014-2017 does not reference the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a salient global commitment guiding UNDP efforts to advance gender equality. As is common throughout UNDP programme guidance, disability is referenced under the overall rubric of 'vulnerable groups.' The evaluation found only a few examples of targeted interventions where women with disabilities were included in programming.

Finding 24

30. UNDP is not a welcoming organization for persons with disabilities. Although it has taken some positive steps to create an enabling work environment at all levels, significant progress has yet to be made. While UNDP does not exclude people with disabilities from any recruitment process or otherwise discriminate against such applicants, there has not been a strong corporate drive to employ persons with disabilities or to set quotas for the hiring of persons with disabilities, and few persons with disabilities work for the organization.

Finding 25

31. UNDP operates under United Nations Development Group comprehensive guidelines on common premises and has set minimum levels of functional accessibility for its offices. The extent of compliance with these guidelines is uneven across country offices and other duty stations, reflecting various resource constraints.

IV. Conclusions

A. Strategic and corporate

Conclusion 1. Globally, UNDP is not widely regarded as a major advocate of or provider of technical assistance for disability-inclusive development and support to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the country level, while there is a strategic fit for UNDP in support of partner government efforts promoting the rights of and services for persons with disabilities, UNDP has not fully leveraged its role as trusted convener, knowledge broker, technical adviser and facilitator of dialogue between government, civil society and national human rights institutions in support of the Convention, thus limiting its potential impact. Its work in support of national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals provides UNDP with an important opportunity in the coming years to help strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities.

32. Evidence collected through the evaluation suggests a strategic fit for UNDP in support of efforts of partner Governments to address the rights of and services for persons with disabilities. Across the array of stakeholders interviewed, from government partners to donors and disabled persons organizations, UNDP is regarded as uniquely well positioned to play a prominent role in advancing the Convention at global and country levels. As identified through the portfolio review, UNDP is well positioned to champion the rights of persons with disabilities. Support to persons with disabilities is a human right and disability-inclusive development is relevant across the UNDP development mandate.

33. While the development of strategic guidance on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is still underway, findings indicate that the inclusion of disability in these frameworks merits increased attention on the part of UNDP. Recognizing the role that UNDP plays in the development sphere and in view of its unique role with government where it operates, there is an important opportunity at the global, regional and country levels for UNDP to strengthen disability inclusion through the Sustainable Development Goal framework.

B. Global partnerships

Conclusion 2. The UNPRPD is an effective vehicle for joint programming to help countries assess the actions they should take to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to help build the legal and institutional capacities needed to do so. Demand is high for funding and participation. Since its inception, the UNPRPD has provided support to more than 20 countries, with at least an additional 10 to be added in the first half of 2017. There remains high, unmet demand from UNCTs and partner Governments to participate. Sustained resource mobilization will be required in order to meet this demand.

34. UNDP played a fundamental role in designing and setting up the UNPRPD. Its work on the UNPRPD, both as host of the technical secretariat and fund manager,

and as a project implementer, has been favourably viewed by key stakeholders. Results from the first funding round of the UNPRPD suggest that programmes have achieved more outcome-level objectives than expected. While awareness of the UNPRPD is high in the UNDP country offices visited, this awareness is variable across UNDP country offices.

C. UNDP programming

Conclusion 3. UNDP has effectively supported disability work where there was clear national ownership and leadership in advancing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UNDP support in this area typically includes strategy development, an assessment of policy gaps and efforts to revise legal systems and build government capacities. UNDP has provided support at national and subnational levels and in some cases has been instrumental in helping Governments to adopt and implement the Convention.

35. Evidence from interviews in the 11 countries visited suggest there is high-level interest on the part of countries for UNDP to expand its support on disability-inclusive development, to help with compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities while also addressing disability indicators within the Sustainable Development Goals. An especially valued role for UNDP is to help set strategies and then monitor the roll-out of national development plans that comply with the Convention.

36. Mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities across the UNDP thematic areas of work has been uneven and generally of limited scope. While there is some evidence of positive country-level results, there are also areas where the inclusion of disability-inclusive programming has been surprisingly limited, for example in support of electoral reform.

37. UNDP has yet to develop a comprehensive approach to disability inclusion in its governance and peacebuilding activities, to address the diversity of disability and the far reaching obligations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in domestic legal frameworks. Future direction is needed on including persons with disabilities in rule of law efforts, such as: reform of judicial, legal and regulatory frameworks (e.g., codes, laws, constitutions) that support democratic institutions; creating entry points for advancing disability inclusion in programming to improve access to justice and the skills and knowledge necessary to use the justice system effectively; advancing the engagement of disabled persons' organizations in their efforts to advance national and local governance reform; and identification of diverse strategies of support for the participation of persons with disabilities in accessing justice mechanisms.

D. UNDP internal culture and procedures

Conclusion 4. UNDP is not a welcoming organization for persons with disabilities. While it has taken some positive steps such as formulating a diversity and inclusiveness strategy, attention to implementing this strategy has been sporadic and ineffectual. Conditions of recruitment, hiring and

employment present barriers for persons with disabilities, and UNDP has not taken the necessary steps to ensure that its facilities are accessible.

38. While some country offices' human resource departments demonstrate an understanding of reasonable accommodation and other positive measures to facilitate inclusion in the workplace, there are only a few instances of such knowledge being utilized in practice. The majority of UNDP country office premises visited had numerous environmental barriers that were at odds with accessibility and universal design requirements.

V. Recommendations

A. Strategic and corporate

39. The next UNDP strategic plan, for the period 2018-2021, should give significantly greater prominence and attention to the rights of persons with disabilities, with outcomes and outputs designed to align substantively with the breadth of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and situate UNDP as a leading provider of disability-inclusive expertise. UNDP should then develop an action plan on disability that publicly details the UNDP approach with clear goal(s), targets and specific indicators within a revised integrated results and resources framework (IRRF).

40. In its efforts to help Governments achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should pay special attention to disability-inclusive targets, emphasizing Goal 16, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, where UNDP is an acknowledged lead agency. The aim of UNDP to support Governments in the implementation of disability-inclusive development targets under the Goals should be noted in the new strategic plan and IRRF.

41. The UNDP Disability Guidance Note should be revised and reissued to articulate recommendations for programme design and implementation that are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals. This guidance should include a 'toolkit' for how to include disability in the various areas of UNDP programming and operations.

B. Global partnerships

42. UNDP management at the country level should work through the resident coordinator system and UNCT counterparts to ensure that all United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) identify persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group, and specify outcomes for targeted and mainstreamed programming that address implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disability-inclusive development actions, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals. Persons with disabilities, disabled people's organizations and civil society groups working on disability inclusion should be consulted as part of the UNDAF planning process.

43. Expansion and increased funding for the UNPRPD is strongly urged. In addition to current donor support, the technical secretariat should facilitate a discussion within the policy board on the possibility of partnerships with private sector entities and foundations as part of an expanded resource mobilization effort.

44. UNDP should deepen its partnerships with disabled people's organizations to utilize their expertise on disability inclusion for both programming and human resource issues.

C. UNDP programming

45. UNDP efforts in support of employment and livelihood improvement should be aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including their right to freely choose their work on an equal basis with others. Whenever feasible, UNDP should promote programmes that reach the full diversity of the disability community.

46. UNDP support to social protection programming should include measures to make social protection systems fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. Commensurate with this focus and in keeping with the Convention, UNDP should make clear its commitment to deinstitutionalization, by championing government efforts to plan and carry out transitions to community-based living arrangements.

47. Specific activities targeting disability access must be included in all UNDP electoral assistance projects, including support to partner Governments on electoral access in law, policy and practice.

48. In its work in countries that are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and in environments affected by conflict, UNDP should pay make specific reference to the needs of persons with disabilities in crisis prevention planning and risk assessments, early recovery and post-crisis development planning.

49. At headquarters, regional and country levels, UNDP should pay particular attention to and provide support for improving the collection of data on disability, consistent with Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through its results-oriented annual reporting mechanism, UNDP should periodically track and report on country-level programming and lessons that address the rights of persons with disabilities as participants in and beneficiaries of development.

50. UNDP should review and revise pertinent documentation used for programme design, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that disability inclusion in development is appropriately addressed (e.g., the UNDAF, Gender Equality Strategy, Gender Marker and Seal, social and environmental standards and programme design), and is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal frameworks and indicators that reference persons with disabilities.

D. UNDP internal culture and procedures

51. UNDP should survey its staff to better determine the number of employees with disabilities and the types and costs of reasonable accommodation measures that

have been provided. A line item should be added to the UNDP human resources budget on reasonable accommodation to ensure appropriate funding of reasonable accommodation support. A disability accommodation fund could be established to help secure needed funding. The United Nations Children's Fund's Greening and Accessibility Fund presents an innovative model for UNDP to consider.

52. The UNDP diversity and inclusiveness strategy should be revised to make clear that the organization will adequately support staff with disabilities in all phases of the full employment continuum, including recruitment, retention and retirement, and through sufficient financial resources for workplace accommodation. In addition, policies and grievance procedures should make clear the recourse persons have where their needs for accommodation are not met. To expand understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities across the organization, UNDP should update, relaunch and make mandatory the e-learning module on disabilities and promote it among all staff at all levels.

53. UNDP should implement a recruitment initiative to bring persons with disabilities into the organization, including through targeted advertisements on disability networks. In vacancy announcements, it should specifically encourage persons with disabilities to apply, and adopt affirmative action-like policies that give preference to persons with disabilities who are as equally qualified as other applicants. UNDP should also consider establishing a paid internship programme for qualified persons with disabilities, which could provide a potential pathway to full-time employment.

54. An accessibility audit of UNDP premises and work environments should be carried out to identify existing barriers to inclusion and practical steps that can be taken to eliminate them. This should include a review of information technology security arrangements to ensure their compatibility with relevant accessibility standards. UNDP should set a date by which all of its premises are to accessible, regardless of local building codes.